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## SOME REMARKS ON SAMARITAN LITERATURE AND RELIGION <sup>1</sup>.

THE question has often been put to me, "Who are the Samaritans? Is their religion Jewish, Christian, or Mahometan?" Perhaps this paper may serve, though inadequately, as an answer to that question. There is no need to tell you of the origin of the Samaritan people: to inquire what remnant of the ten tribes remained after the deportation by Shalmaneser: to discuss the attitude of Jewish teachers, at one time regarding them as little, if at all, better than heathen, at another, as only one degree removed from true righteousness. To a gathering like this, such matters would be like twice-told tales. It may, however, be of interest to give a cursory description of the later development of this isolated remnant, or, if you like, of its decay and the causes of it. Until recently it was possible to say little on these points except from outside evidence, which, however valuable, is always inadequate when taken alone. But within the last half century, or less, considerable material has come to light, though it has been little used. First there is the chronicle of Abulfath, in Arabic, and the less valuable book of Joshua, also in Arabic. Secondly, and most important, the chronicle called *Eltholideh* in Samaritan, discovered and published by my revered teacher and friend, Dr. Neubauer. Thirdly, the large mass of liturgies. From these sources it is possible to obtain a very clear view of their history and beliefs; and so, even in this remote corner of research as

<sup>1</sup> A lecture delivered to the Jews' College on March 1, 1896.

elsewhere, the discoveries of our own day seem to eclipse all that went before. But for European scholars until the beginning of the seventeenth century, the only information accessible, outside the Bible, was that furnished by Jewish writers, Christian Fathers, and to a small extent by Arabic authors. Now neither Jews nor Christians were disposed to feel any strong interest in Samaritans; and any one who has had to work at mediaeval records knows the shameless manner in which statements are copied, or shall we say, the trustful, childlike way in which historians bow to authority. The mediaeval writer seems to say: "It's a long way off, and it ought to have been so, and any way I cannot be expected to know everything." It seems clear that the Church Fathers at any rate repeated and copied statements with regard to Samaritan doctrine, which, though they might once have been true, had ceased in course of time to be so. But there was no fresh source of information, and they were bound to furnish explanations, because of the frequent mention of Samaritans, especially in the New Testament. Hence we are told, for instance, that they worship a dove, that their God is Ashima, that they believe neither in angels nor in a future life. Whatever may have been the facts originally, to take this account without question as representing them, say, in the sixteenth century, was about as reasonable as when a writer of that date refers to Tacitus as an authority for the character of the Germans of his time. In fact it was still the age of authority: the spirit of inquiry, of testing facts, had yet to come.

But it is ungrateful as well as impolitic to kick down the ladder by which we have climbed, although from our exalted position at the top we are inclined to look down upon the harmless, necessary bottom rung, and so we must give credit to the great man who first introduced the subject. It was at the beginning of the seventeenth century—to be precise, in 1616—that Pietro della Valle, on his travels, procured at Damascus a copy of the Samaritan text of the

Pentateuch and their Targum, which he piously deposited in the Vatican Library. (He certainly deserves the gratitude of scholars, for it was he who also brought to Europe the first cuneiform inscription, although no results followed for two centuries.) These two texts were published in the Paris polyglott, and thence copied in Walton's polyglott with a (very inadequate) translation, and so made accessible. Naturally they made a stir, and the controversy respecting them has not even yet subsided. Consider the question as it presented itself to the learned world of that time. The history of the Masoretic text was known and accepted with all deference. Here comes a totally distinct recension, preserved by a tribe who admittedly had had no dealings with the Jews. It contained no evidence of the peculiar views attributed to the Samaritans, and therefore could not be an heretical counterfeit. Yet it showed some important differences of reading. Which was to be considered the inspired word of God? The most extreme views were taken; one side claiming all authority for the new text, others as strongly rejecting it. Perhaps the most reasonable view is that of Kennicott, that both texts must be examined, and the differences weighed on their merits. The question was for a time closed by Gesenius' investigations, but his results were by no means final, and there seems now to be a disposition to reopen it. Certainly I am not required to settle it here. When a really critical edition of the Samaritan text appears, it will be more possible to judge of its value. At any rate as a factor in textual criticism, and as awakening interest in the subject, its importance in the seventeenth century is not to be easily overrated. As to the Targum, it is (at least to me) a most interesting document, perhaps the more so from the difficulty of finding good MSS. to settle the text. Various views have been held as to its date and origin, the Samaritans themselves claiming that it was written by one Nathanael in the first century B.C. The real fact seems to be that no Targum was built in a day, nor probably by

one author. The same causes which led to the elaboration of Targum in Judah produced it in Samaria. Probably it was read in the synagogue; otherwise one cannot suppose it would be much read at all. But I know of no statement to that effect in the literature, and the only service in which it definitely appears is that for marriage, when the passage  $\text{וַיִּזְכֹּר}^1$  is read. This, however, is only a semi-religious ceremony, and partakes more of the nature of a festive occasion, a fact which would seem to indicate that Targum was not commonly read. However that may be, I cannot help thinking, from its frequent agreement with Onqelos, that both works had a similar origin, namely, that they are the fixed form of a floating traditional explanation common to all Syria, and that the line of division between Jews and Samaritans was by no means impassable in the early centuries of our era. I am inclined to think that it was reduced to writing and edited by the fourth century, though that question need not be discussed here. It is likely at any rate that Arabic became the vernacular soon after the Hejira, in which case it would not have been worth while to undertake an Aramaic work of these proportions; and it is certain that the Targum was no longer in common use in the tenth century. When, however, I say it was fixed at that time, the word is only to be understood relatively. The main value of the version does not lie in its exegesis, for it is very close to the text, and gives little information on that head, but consists in its being the earliest and most extensive monument of what may be called *classical* Samaritan, or, shall we say, of Palestinian Aramaic<sup>2</sup>. Now precisely in this respect, as a criterion of correct forms, the Targum text is by no means *fixed*. It has indeed been elaborately and carefully edited by Petermann and Vollers, but an examination of

<sup>1</sup> Exod. ii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> For comparative purposes the Palestinian Syriac forms are important. See the fragments published by Messrs. Gwilliam, Burkitt, and Stenning, in *Anecdota Oxoniensia*, Semitic Series, vol. I, pt. v and pt. ix.

their materials shows that the MSS. represent widely different recensions. All are close to the Hebrew, but differ in forms and even in words. Probably this is in many cases due to local differences of dialect: much may be set down to corruptions, since all the MSS. date from a time when Aramaic was as much a dead language as Hebrew. Moreover, in treating a dialect so little known as this, comparison is the only sound method. It is of no use to make up one's mind beforehand what ought to be the form, as the usual practice has been, but to try to discover what, as a matter of fact, it was. Yet the most important aid for this purpose was hardly available for Petermann's edition. The only literature of at all the same date as the Targum is that of the earlier liturgy (Marqah and Amram of the fourth century). Even of this there is only at present one MS. (Vaticanus) which is to be trusted for the forms. No edition therefore of the Targum can be satisfactory which does not take account of the forms of the Vatican liturgical MS. This brings me to speak, but only briefly, of the liturgies. They are of great interest, because they present a practically continuous history of doctrine for at any rate the last 1,600 years. The earliest compositions which can be dated with anything like certainty are those of Amram and Marqah—the latter being the more prolific of the two and the most famous of all their authors. According to the chronicle Eltholideh, mentioned above, Marqah lived in the time of Baba Rabba (ob. 362 A.D.). An angel appeared at his birth, and bade his father call the child's name Moses. As, however, this name was too sacred for common use, he was called Marqah, which has the same numerical value. He was of priestly family, though not High Priest. That is all that we are told definitely about him. We may conclude that his family was of some importance, that he was probably intimate with Baba, and that he wrote his hymns and prayers at the request of Baba, who, according to the chronicle, restored the synagogue services. It is note-

worthy too that, just as the miraculous story of his birth seems to indicate that he was called Moses as well as Marqah, so his father, Amram ben Sered, had a by-name Tutah, and his son was called Nanah. There is nothing strange in their having two names, but it is curious that the names have a Roman look: Tutah=Titus, Marqah=Marcus, Nanah=Nonus. This may show that they had dealings with the Romans, or were on friendly terms at least with some Roman family.

The Amram of the liturgies is not clearly identified. I believe him to be the same as Amram ben Sered, the father of Marqah, but the reasons for this belief may be omitted.

To return then, it will be seen that the liturgies are not very ancient, nor have they great literary merit; but they offer the most trustworthy means at our disposal for arriving at a correct understanding of Samaritan theology. I think therefore it may be of interest to you to consider the main characteristics, and some details of the beliefs implied in them. First, it is to be remarked, that the Samaritans represent the strictly conservative side of religion. The foundation of their faith was the same as that recognized in Judaea at the time of the second temple,—the law of Moses; and from the fact that they never received any other of the Jewish canon, the superstructure of religious belief was bound to be slight. Imagine Judaism without the Psalms, without the Prophets! I said before that statements were repeated by the Church Fathers which might once have been true, but had ceased to be so. For instance, they seem to be confounded with the Sadducees (so even by Maqrizi, and perhaps Qirquesani), and in this a basis of fact may be detected. For at the time of the separation, at the second temple, they were recruited and their theology was no doubt formulated, by members of the priestly caste from Jerusalem, who would have belonged to the conservative, or if we may speak of it so early, the Sadducean party. As the twig was bent so the tree grew,

so far as it grew at all. "They did, it is true, modify and enlarge their creed, and that in important particulars, . . . but . . . by the same process of absorption: it was in no sense a development of the religious feeling of the people<sup>1</sup>." Now both of the special properties of man, language and religion, are living organisms; and living implies growth. Judaism and Samaritanism, though starting from the same root, the law of Moses, have this difference: Judaism is ever growing, ever adapting itself to its environment, like Aaron's rod that budded, ever putting forth leaves for the healing of the nations. It lives. Samaritanism is like a tree that is dried up from the root. For a time it seemed to put forth shoots, even flowers. Then it died, and soon it will be cut down and buried. Of course, one cannot assign exact dates to anything so intangible as religious growth, but a more or less definite period may be suggested for it. We have no documents to show the state of their creed in the centuries before our era; but from the fact that we find it pretty fully developed in the fourth century, we must suppose that it had grown in the meanwhile. Even so early as St. John's Gospel, the belief in a Messiah was generally accepted; while in the writings of Marqah the belief e. g. in a future life, in angels, and in the supreme position of Moses, is taken for granted. Here, however, their vitality practically ceased. In the centuries immediately succeeding this Augustan age, so to speak, of Samaritan literature and theology, few writers flourished, and none of them was really great. Possibly the troubles under Zeno and Justinian demanded all their attention, and the nation never recovered from the severe treatment of the latter in 529. Literature was indeed produced subsequently, and in large quantities, but it bears all the marks of a silver age. We know how, in any country, literature will continue to drag its slow length along after the virtue is gone out of it. There are some prayers, in a rather debased Aramaic, of the eleventh

<sup>1</sup> Nutt, *Sketch of Samaritan History*, &c., p. 42.



century, and numerous treatises in Arabic on theological and other subjects in that and the three succeeding centuries. The chronicle of Eltholideh, too, belongs chiefly to the eleventh century. It is to be remarked that this period nearly coincides with Jewish activity in the same direction inaugurated by Saadiah Gaon. The fact is significant; and we can only regret that the Samaritan-Arabic literature is not yet accessible. A still later period of artificial vitality occurred in the fourteenth century, under Pinhas (Finas) the High Priest. To that date belongs the chronicle of Abulfath in Arabic, and the large mass of prayers and liturgical compositions for special occasions, written in a debased mixture of Hebrew and Aramaic. Since that time the literature is little else than a wearisome reiteration of the thoughts of earlier writers. Now in the fourteenth century, though there was activity, I say it was artificial. There is no real development, no larger view which is not to be found expressed or implied in the fourth century. The only new thing is a certain tendency to mystical and metaphysical doctrines. Who shall say whether or not these are evidence of decay?

With regard to their views, it may be said in general that there is little that is distinctive about them. The question rather is, how much of Jewish religious development they adopted. It will be, perhaps, of most interest if we consider specially those doctrines which, according to early accounts, they did not hold, viz. the future life, and the belief in angels. Remembering that all their theology was originally derived solely from the Pentateuch, let us see how far they advanced. The doctrine, then, of a future life, with rewards and punishments, is founded on Deut. xxxii. 35 *seqq.*, with their reading of לַיִם for לִי: so that it reads, "is not this laid up in store with me . . . till the day of vengeance: till the time when their foot shall slide," &c.; and the rest of the song thus has the same reference. The judgment-day is usually called "the day of vengeance and recompense" (יִום נִקָּם וְשָׁלוֹם) from this passage, or simply

"the day of (the great) judgment." Already in Marqah it is an article of faith, but it is only later that we find any full account of the condition of souls after the judgment. First, the judgment is after death, as in the prayers for the dead, "After thee Death pursues, and the day of judgment after that<sup>1</sup>." "For thy work is stored up with him, sealed in his treasure-houses, against the day of resurrection, day of the solemn reckoning<sup>2</sup>." It is a time of rewards as well as of punishment. On the great day of resurrection there will be great deliverance for believers, who will go to dwell in the Garden of Eden. This side, however, is made less prominent. They insist rather on the fate of the wicked. "Surely a fire shall burn in their heart, and every one of them shall be ashamed of his works, . . . and a voice shall come unto them . . . though ye turn now to your God, yet shall ye be burned with fire<sup>3</sup>." Moses is the only intercessor: "Mourning shall not help the dying; Moses the chosen helpeth him<sup>4</sup>": "by whose prayers the burning fire shall be quenched<sup>5</sup>." Apparently forgiveness is not impossible in the next world: at least there would not otherwise be much point in praying for the dead,— "Pardon, O Lord, him who is taken away from this world and departs: grant him mercy as his portion, and his place in the Garden of Eden<sup>6</sup>."

With regard to angels the case is quite as clear. True Reland<sup>7</sup> maintained that angels had no place in Samaritan theology, and explained them away as "*virtutes Dei*." Yet all his ingenuity will not annul the fact that they do appear in the Pentateuch, and that therefore Samaritans were bound to accept them in some form. The contrary statement, as mentioned before, rested on a confusion with the Sadducees. But it had become untrue before the time e.g. of Leontius (seventh century) who makes it, and it was no less untrue in the time of Maqrizi, whose authority,

<sup>1</sup> Heidenheim, *Sam. Liturgie*, No. 124. 2.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* No. 119. 9 and 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Gesenii Carm. Sam.*, No. 7. 15.

<sup>4</sup> *H., S. L.*, No. 121. 15.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 100. 16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 121. 20.

<sup>7</sup> *Dissert.* vii, 8.

a Christian Arab writer, had borrowed from the Fathers. Even in the Targum we find frequent mention of angels to avoid anthropomorphisms: e.g. Gen. v. 24, "and Enoch walked with God; and he was not; for the angels took him"; and ix. 6, "for in the image of the angels made he man:" but since the date of the Targum is uncertain, I shall say no more of it. Marqah in a quasi-Agadic fragment (Heid., *Sam. Lit.* v.) enumerates various appearances of angels, and lays stress on the fact that it was an angel who spoke with Moses in the bush and on Mount Sinai. "Moses saw a form sent forth by God," although in Exod. xxiv and xxxiii neither the text nor Targum has this reading. So in a well-known prayer he prays in the name of "the hosts of the Angels." They are even individualized. God spoke the ten words, but it was Cabod who gave the tables of the law to Moses, a personification which may be compared with כבוד in Ezekiel. Later perhaps the teaching on the subject may have become vague, as we find Abulhassan of Tyre, in the eleventh century, writing a treatise in support of it. It is afterwards much extended. In a hymn of Meshalmah (eighteenth century) "the four quarters of heaven rest on pillars borne up by the four angels." Abisha, in the fourteenth century, says that the angels stand round the throne in the eighth heaven. Moses is said to ascend from earth to "the dwelling of the angels," who are in the first eight heavens. At the time when Moses was exposed on the river, four angels, Cabala', Penue!, Anusa, and Zilpah, came from heaven to earth to attend on him<sup>1</sup>. Finally there is a destroying angel, Mehablah, who corresponds somewhat to Satan. They are distinct from created things, i. e. they were not created in the six days, but are higher than men, and were present at the creation and at the giving of the law<sup>2</sup>. In all this there is nothing strikingly at variance with views found elsewhere; still less can we say that they did not believe in angels or a future state.

<sup>1</sup> H., S. L., No. 14. 7. 6.

<sup>2</sup> G. C. S. IV, 8 and 3.

I need not speak of the Taheb or Messiah, as I have already dealt with the subject elsewhere<sup>1</sup>, but two points may be noticed which are rather more distinctive: (1) The Fanuta. During the time immediately following the Exodus, Israel enjoyed the divine favour, רחוקה. This continued until the priesthood of Uzzi, contemporary of Eli, for the chronicles give a complete and independent list of priests from Aaron to the present day. It was Eli who caused a schism in Israel by deserting Mount Gerizim, the place which the Lord had chosen to put his name there, and instituting a priesthood, not of the true line, at Shilo. That was in the twenty-fifth year of the priesthood of Uzzi, 260 years after the entry into Canaan. In consequence of this wickedness, says Eltholideh, "the Lord made the holy tabernacle to disappear." The succeeding period, which still continues, is called פְּנוּתָה (probably "turning away" of God's favour), and is the cause of all the troubles which have come upon them. "The Fanuta it is which causes all our distress, says Marqah, may it be accursed in every place." They look for the Taheb, or restorer, to bring back God's favour and the glory of Israel. (2) The other point to be noticed, is their mystical teaching, which would take long to explain, and even then you would not understand it—nor should I—such is the nature of mysticism. The two terms, with which the whole doctrine deals, are כְּסִי, "the hidden," and גִּלִּי, "the revealed," and the system, if it can be called so, is an attempt to explain the old, old difficulty, as to the way in which God, or the soul, can have any relation to matter. Evidently we need not expect from the Samaritans any satisfactory solution of a problem which has puzzled philosophers ever since men began to think. You may remember, for instance, that Lucretius, who would have liked to be a materialist, felt the necessity of attacking the difficulty, and decided that the material body of man acts on something more refined than ordinary matter, and that again on the soul, and vice versa. But this is only

<sup>1</sup> *Expositor* for March, 1895.

removing the difficulty one degree, like the Indian fable that the earth rests on an elephant, the elephant on a tortoise, and the tortoise on nothing. Of course as long as כסי meant the unseen world, and גלי the material world, things are comparatively simple. This is perhaps all they meant in Marqah, but it was not enough to satisfy human reasoning. Hence we find later that כסי is the ἀπέραντος δύναμις, to adopt a phrase used to describe the philosophy of Simon Magus, the boundless potentiality existing in heaven, where all things are before they are. It seems again to be equivalent to חכמה, the divine wisdom as manifested especially in Creation, almost a person, as in Prov. iii and viii. It is in fact, if we push the doctrine to its conclusion, the Λόγος, which may be made matter. The גלי is conversely the same when ἐξεικονισθεῖσα. The distinction is well brought out when the creation and the law-giving are compared. Both are created by the word, and come forth from the hidden world to the world of sense (מן עולם כסאיתה) attended by the angels, or powers of the unseen. In both, the word, like the intermediate soul in Lucretius, is something slightly less spiritual than God, emanating from God, and thus able to affect matter, so that it takes form in one case as the material world, in the other case as the Law. An explanation of the process is offered in another passage where the world is compared to a child which comes obediently to the word of its teacher. The above is of course a very rough and imperfect account of the doctrine, but it is enough to indicate the origin of it. There are in it elements of Alexandrine philosophy, but beyond all it is due to the Qabbalah. If you insist on the late origin of the Qabbalistic system, in its developed form, there is of course a difficulty in making it the foundation of Samaritan metaphysic in the fourth century. But I have always believed that we ought to accept the early tradition of the Qabbalah, and that its teaching was much more wide-spread than is usually supposed. Evidence to the same effect has recently come to light in a chronicle published

by Dr. Neubauer<sup>1</sup>. If then we find it fully fledged in the ninth century, there is no difficulty in believing that the Samaritans had taken over (however clumsily) its main teachings in the fourth century, and had further developed it by the fourteenth.

Thus we see that in all important points they are indebted to Jewish doctrine. Nor is this surprising. Geiger has pointed out that it is not such abstract views, but differences in the observance of the Law, which cause lasting dissension in Judaism. (This point might be illustrated from the history of the early Christians.) They might well adopt so much, while hotly opposing the Jews on more technical grounds. Moreover, the difference was largely political, and of long standing. It is a continuance of the animosity between North and South, Israel and Judah, the revolt against centralization under Jeroboam I, explain it how we will. Whatever may have been the motives of that schism, wisdom is justified of her children. Judah has gone on ever since, with varying fortunes, but with the same aims—ever increasing, ever exerting an influence on the world: while Israel, for so the Samaritans believe themselves, has become, owing largely to its turbulent spirit, ever more and more obscure, till now the miserable remnant has no aims beyond its own petty quarrels and intrigues, and is hardly known outside its native town:

Forgotten travellers of an age outworn,  
Left on the wayside by the wheels of time  
That pass and pass them.

In conclusion, I wish to make an appeal to you. One talks glibly about a writer's having lived certainly in such and such a century, and one does not dilate upon the toil and the headaches which that certainty has involved. But chronology is a most important thing in any history, and it requires special study in the case of the Samaritans, because the wildest statements have been made on the

<sup>1</sup> ספר יחזק, in *Med. Jewish Chron.* II, p. III sqq., Oxford, 1895.

subject. I therefore set myself some years ago to this special study, than which there is none more distressing, baffling, and disappointing. The materials are, for the earlier period, the chronicles mentioned before and some occasional allusions in the liturgies. For the time since 1400 the chief material is in the colophons and epigraphs of MSS. I have collected these from most of the MSS. in public libraries in Europe, and in many private libraries. The very dry results are all tabulated. But there must be many MSS. or fragments belonging to private persons, which have not been examined. It is most important that any information they contain should be added to what is already collected. I beg you therefore, if any one has any such fragment or knows of the existence of any, to give me the opportunity of inspecting it. Even the smallest and apparently most insignificant fragment may be useful, when taken in conjunction with what is already collected. A short time ago Dr. Friedländer kindly lent me several fragments for examination. The most important consisted, I think, of only two leaves, much obliterated, but it gave me an obscure person's name for which I had looked in vain for years. In return I will gladly describe the contents of the documents, and send them back. One must be content to wade through many volumes if at the end one ascertains one name or rectifies one date. Only so will a continuous history be possible.

A. COWLEY.